

Session Three

Be Smart About Your Heart

Know Your ABCs

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Session Three**Be Smart About Your Heart:
Know Your ABCs**

The NDEP strongly encourages inviting a medical person (health care provider or certified diabetes educator) to participate in any sessions that you conduct to provide support for the discussion and to answer any specific medical questions that may arise.

Background

Heart disease and stroke kill two-thirds of people with diabetes. Blood sugar (blood glucose) control is very important for preventing these complications and others, but so are blood pressure and cholesterol control.

Objectives

1. To identify some of the signs and symptoms of heart disease.
2. To name the ABCs of diabetes.
3. To discuss why control of the ABCs of diabetes is important.
4. To identify some practical day-to-day actions that people with diabetes can take to control the ABCs.

Time needed for discussion: 45 to 60 minutes.



For instructions on borrowing *The Debilitator* film, see page 4 of this guide.

The handout *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes: A1C, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol* can be found behind the Handouts tab at the end of this guide. This handout is also available in Spanish at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/diabetes/SpanishABCbrochure.pdf>.

Materials

- DVD of the film *The Debilitator*.
- DVD player/TV monitor.
- Handout: NDEP brochure *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes: A1C, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol* (at least one copy for each participant).

Order the brochure by fax or mail using the *NDEP Publications Order Form* at the end of this guide, order the brochure online from <http://www.ndep.nih.gov>, or download it for photocopying from http://ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/ControlABC_broch_Eng.pdf.

- Optional: Flipchart or blackboard for writing down key words from discussion.

Method

- Conduct a facilitated discussion (group discussion with a leader asking stimulation questions).
- Play the film, or select scenes from the film as needed.



Make sure to cover these important points during the session:

- The number one cause of death among people with diabetes is heart disease.
- The ABCs of diabetes are **A1C**, **B**lood pressure, and **C**holesterol.
- A1C (formerly known as hemoglobin A1C) measures average blood sugar (blood glucose) control over the past 3 months. The goal for a person with diabetes is to have an A1C level of less than 7.0.
- Controlling blood pressure is also very important in people with diabetes. High blood pressure increases the work that the heart must do to push the blood through the body, and it can lead to heart attack, stroke, and eye and kidney disease. The goal for blood pressure for someone with diabetes is less than 130/80.
- Cholesterol is a fat that clogs up the arteries and makes it harder for blood to flow through them. A high level of LDL cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol) increases the risk of a heart attack, a stroke, and circulation problems. The goal for LDL cholesterol for someone with diabetes is less than 100. For people with multiple risk factors (for example, diabetes, high

blood pressure, and tobacco use), the goal for LDL cholesterol is less than 70.



DVD

1. **Tell the group:** Think back to the funeral scene in the film. *[You may want to replay that scene in the film to refresh participants' memories.]*

Consider using the following questions to encourage discussion of the important points for this session:

- Were you surprised that Calvin dies of a heart attack in his dream? Were you aware of the link between diabetes and heart disease?
- Why do you think that people with diabetes are more likely than people without diabetes to have heart disease and stroke?



DVD

2. **Tell the group:** Think now about the scene in which Calvin tells his daughter, "I'll be all right....I'll mow the lawn later and that will be my exercise, and that will bring my blood sugar down." *[You may want to replay that scene in the film.]*

Consider using the following questions for discussion:

- **Ask:** What do you think, or how do you feel, about the fact that (in his dream) Calvin dies of a heart attack while mowing the lawn?

Potential reactions include:

- What was his family supposed to do? He went out to exercise, and he dropped dead!
- I thought that he was dying of heat stroke because he was sweating.
- This scene is proof that exercise is dangerous. I don't want to die while getting exercise. Wasn't there a famous exercise guy who died while running?
- **Say:** So there may be some mixed messages in this scene about exercise. Did Calvin have early warning signs that he might be having trouble with his heart?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- Swelling in the feet and trouble breathing when lying flat in bed can be signs of heart trouble.
- Even if no symptoms occur, high blood sugar and high blood pressure by themselves are risk factors for heart attack and stroke.

3. **Ask:** Now that we know about these early warning signs, does anyone have any suggestions about what Calvin could have done to avoid having a heart attack while mowing the lawn?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- He could have talked to his doctor about how to start increasing his physical activity safely.
 - He could have talked to his doctor about how to get his blood sugar and his blood pressure under control before exercising heavily.
 - He could have asked his doctor about his swollen feet and his shortness of breath.
 - He could have talked to his doctor about other actions to take to protect his heart (for example, taking baby aspirin, or giving up tobacco if he smokes or chews).
 - He could have talked to his doctor about whether he needed an exercise treadmill test or other tests of his heart's function.
 - He could have learned the early warning signs of a heart attack.
4. **Ask:** Can anybody name some benefits of getting regular physical activity, especially for people with diabetes?



Make sure that the discussion brings out the fact that physical activity can

- Lower your blood sugar.
- Lower your blood pressure.
- Reduce stress.
- Help you sleep better.

5. **Say:** So, with all these benefits of increased physical activity, why did Calvin die while mowing the lawn in his dream?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- His blood sugar and blood pressure may have been too high at the time because he was not taking his medication, not eating right, or not taking care of himself in general.
- He started strenuous physical activity abruptly, and it was too much for him.
- He may not have recognized, or he may have been ignoring, early warning signs of a heart attack (chest pressure, nausea, shortness of breath, dizziness, sweating).



DVD

6. **Tell the group:** Now I'd like you to think now about the scene with Calvin and Dr. Goodson. *[You may want to replay that scene in the film.]*

Consider using the following questions for discussion:

- **Ask:** Can anybody remember the points that Dr. Goodson made about how to take care of your diabetes?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- Control your blood sugar.
- Get regular check-ups from your doctor.

- Take medicines as directed.
- Eat healthful meals.
- Get regular physical activity.
- **Ask:** Can anyone tell me what A1C means? *[A1C measures average blood sugar (blood glucose) over the past 3 months.]* Do you remember how Dr. Goodson and Calvin Dixon described A1C? *[It is like a batting average.]* Can anyone tell me what the A1C goal is for a person with diabetes? *[The A1C goal is less than 7.0.]*



Classroom Exercise

1. **Say:** Checking your blood sugar with a fingerstick tells you what your blood sugar is at that moment. When you check your own blood sugar at home with a glucose monitor, that gives you a snapshot of what your blood sugar is at the moment. But you want to know the bigger picture, not just a snapshot. The A1C measurement can tell you the 3-month average of all those ups and downs.
2. **Ask:** Can anyone tell me what your average blood sugar is if your A1C is 7.0?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- An A1C of 7.0 corresponds to an average blood sugar of 150 over the past 3 months.
 - This does not mean that the goal for a fasting blood sugar level (first thing in the morning before you eat) is 150.
 - It is best to start the day with a fasting blood sugar of 80 to 120.
3. **Say:** The film didn't give much information about blood pressure and cholesterol. Does anyone know what the ABCs of diabetes are? *[It's OK to drop hints if no one comes up with the answer right away.]*



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- **A** = A1C.
 - **B** = Blood pressure.
 - **C** = Cholesterol.
4. **Say:** We just talked about the goal for A1C. What was that goal again? *[Less than 7.0.]*
 5. **Ask:** Does anyone know what the goals are for blood pressure and LDL cholesterol for someone with diabetes?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- The goal for blood pressure is less than 130/80.
 - The goal for LDL cholesterol is less than 100.
6. **Ask:** Can anyone name some actions that you can take to reach your ABCs?



Make sure that the following points are brought out in the discussion:

- Take the medicines prescribed by your doctor.
- Eat less fat (lard, butter, fatty meats, grease, fried foods).
- Eat less salt.
- Be physically active.
- Lose some weight.
- Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.



The handout *If You Have Diabetes, Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers* can be found behind the Handouts tab at the end of this guide.

Distribute and Review Handout

Distribute the NDEP brochures *If You Have Diabetes, Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers* and *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes: A1C, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol* to each participant. Tell the participants to take the brochure home and discuss its contents with family members and friends.

